

AUTOMATION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN THE STATE OF TELANGANA: A PROPOSAL

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Public libraries are institutions which support democracy and development in the society by offering free access to information. Public library is the local gateway to knowledge, providing basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups. The expectations of the users of any library are quite high and the libraries are in a position to face the new challenges posed by the advent of Information Technology and at the same time to satisfy the complex requirements of the users. The new state of Telangana was formed in June 2014. The article focuses upon a systematic process and steps to do automation of public libraries in the state of Telangana.

Keywords: Public Libraries; Information; Computers; Automation.

INTRODUCTION

Public Libraries played significant role during the India's struggle for independence. Many stalwarts encouraged the libraries and some of them even identified themselves with the growth of Public Library system. Over the years, Public Library activities have spread to the villages also. Since the literacy rate is not high, the demand for the library services by the users is not high, but during the recent years the role of public libraries in supporting the educational and information needs is on the increase. The students, appearing for examinations privately, through correspondence courses, under the Open and Distance Education system, require support from the Public Libraries. But the Public libraries have become dormant and the activities are restricted to acquisition of reading materials occasionally and many are not able to provide enough reading materials to the increasing number of users. It is also true that enough care is not taken while selecting books in the public library system. Several Public libraries predominantly provide newspapers and current magazines.

In order to serve the diverse needs of the users, the public libraries should equip themselves with the latest techniques. The Librarians should acquire the necessary skills to find out the ways and means for resource sharing from other libraries in a reasonable time, if they do not have certain materials.

The first priority of the state is to bring legislation "Telangana State Public Libraries Act" to give statutory status to the Public Library System in the State.

MODERNIZATION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Public Libraries should introduce the Computers in to their libraries to attract more users and run the services efficiently. Computers will act as efficient tools to store, organize and retrieve the materials in the libraries. They cannot replace the manpower but they can aid the library staff to

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discharge their duties fast, efficient and accurate. The libraries should, as a first step create a database of what they have in their libraries before they could attend to the needs of the users. Several Public Libraries and Aided libraries have very rich collections, which should be available to needy users. Any amount of money will not be sufficient to provide all the reading materials in all the libraries. Resource sharing among the libraries is the only means to meet the requirements of the users. The best way is to use the available resources to the optimal level using Information Technology and then plan to acquire whatever necessary.

Planning Library Automation

Planning for library automation will include:

- a) Hardware and Software,
- b) Communication facilities and
- c) Manpower (Staff)

a) Hardware and Software

Planning for hardware in a library may be done keeping in view of the activities to be automated, the volume of data, number of terminals needed etc., A small committee can work on the required configuration with necessary inputs. The committee may also evaluate the available Library Application Software packages, vis-a-vis Open Source Software. Simultaneously, the staff training needs to be conducted in phased manner. The next step is to establish communication facilities for networking the public libraries spread across the State. It is advisable to have VSAT dish antennas at different Regional Centers for effective data communication as part of Resource Sharing among the Libraries.

Hardware & Software:

- Powerful Server
- Operating system with unlimited License
- KOHA (OSS) application software
- UPS system
- Barcode Equipment

- Switches
- Network cables
- Laser printers & Scanners
- Electrical and data cabling

b) Communication Facilities

- VSAT antennae or
- Leased line with Internet facility

c) Manpower Training

Training of existing manpower needs to be considered as priority. Training sessions need to be conducted on site with hands-on-experience to the staff members in real environment. Any theoretical training sessions will not help for better and effective change over from the manual to the automated activities. Identification of staff for automation should be based on the interest and inclination of staff to learn new things and also work willingly in the new work environment.

The Vendors of the Hardware and Software normally train some staff members and these staff members in turn should train other members over a period. Any contract work given outside for creating the databases and the manpower, who are not professional library staff members would lead to problems at a later date. The Library Staff members should take the changeover as a challenge to show to others that they can learn and work in new situations.

Public Libraries Automation should focus on the following:

- a) Creating databases of books and other reading materials
- b) Sharing the existing resources over a Network
- c) Creating Specialized Collection Centers, after identifying some libraries, based on the present strengths.
- d) Document Imaging, Storing and Retrieval of old classics, manuscripts and books before they become un-usable.
- e) Creating the Home pages / Web pages

- f) Creating Digital resources
- g) Libraries to be developed as Information Resource Centers with local content

PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN TELANGANA

There needs a vision to establish “**Bangaru Telangana**” banishing poverty and illiteracy. It also has to create a knowledge Society. Globally it is recognized that information is “power”. The recognized channels for the flow of information in society are Education, Libraries and Mass media. Education and Mass media has progressed under the Plans of the Central and State Governments but the Libraries are left out. Libraries support Education by disseminating structured information. In contrast, information disseminated by the Mass media - Newspapers, Cinema, Radio and T.V is not structured which can be heard, seen and sometimes forgotten. The structured information available through libraries should be made available to everybody, everywhere and every time for over all development.

The combined State of Andhra Pradesh had a glorious past of Library Movement since 1914 and it has enacted an Integrated Public Libraries Act. The Act was amended from time to time and a ‘**Grandhalaya Parishad**’ was established with a Chairman. All the Districts have established Library System apart from Government Libraries. Now the need is to create Telangana State Public Libraries Act and strengthen the public libraries in Telangana.

Action Plan for Computerization

Public Library System in the State of Telangana consists of the following:

- State Central Library
- Regional Libraries
- District Central Libraries
- Branch Libraries
- Village Libraries
- Book Deposit Centers
- Mobile Libraries

Computerization of Public Libraries may be implemented in phased manner. Each of these libraries should have an Internet connectivity with State Wide Area Network. The following Libraries may be taken up for computerization as a first step with in a time frame.

- State Central Library
- State Regional Libraries
- District Central Libraries

These libraries have very rich collection and presently they are catering to large number of users. The above libraries may be grouped on the bases of their book collection.

Group I

State Central Library, Hyderabad: This is an Apex library in the State and this need to be converted as Reference Library because of its rich and rare collection. Some documents need to be digitized for full text Network access over the state.

Group II

City Central Library, Ashok Nagar, Hyderabad: This is the largest District Central Library covering Twin Cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad attracting large number of users. The University of Hyderabad, on turnkey basis, completed computerization of this Library after signing a MoU with HCGS. It was formally inaugurated for public use in the year 2001. It has the distinction of being the First Public Library in the Country to have all operations computerized, all books Bar coded, all members are issued with Bar-coded ID cards, and Library card catalogue was replaced with computer catalogue in multilingual format (Online Public Access Catalogue) for users. All the Professional staff members were trained to handle various operations and large number of users was also trained in using the computerized catalogue. It has the Internet and e-mail facilities for users with nominal charges.

Group III

All libraries, where the present book collection is over 50,000 volumes fall under this group. They are:

- State Regional Library, Warangal
- State Regional Library, Nizamabad
- District Central Library, Ranga Reddy

Group IV

All Libraries, where the present book collection is less than 50,000 volumes fall under this group. They are:

- District Central Library, Nizamabad
- District Central Library, Karimnagar
- District Central Library, Khammam
- District Central Library, Medak
- District Central Library, Nalgonda
- District Central Library, Warangal
- District Central Library, Adilabad
- District Central Library, Mahabubnagar

The following guidelines may be followed before undertaking automation of libraries:

I Step

- a. A purchase committee to be constituted to work out an effective and efficient Hardware configuration and appropriate Library Application Software package.
- b. Purchase procedure to be worked out and purchase orders to be placed with Vendors.
- c. Site preparation, Electrical and data cabling to be taken up.
- d. Necessary staff needs to be identified to undergo Hands-on-training in Library Automation by the time the Hardware is installed.
- e. Cutoff date to be identified for starting the database creation and bar-coding of books.

II Step

- a. Necessary manpower needs to be identified for retrospective conversion of old records.

- b. Database to be made available to the users through Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)
- c. Issuing the Bar-coded Identification Cards to the Users for borrowing books at the Circulation Desk.
- d. Network arrangements to be taken up with other libraries for sharing the available resources in the database.
- e. Establishing the Photocopying, e-mail, and Internet facilities.
- f. Creating an efficient Document Delivery Service among the libraries.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPUTERIZATION

- Hardware
- Peripherals
- Operating system
- Application Software
- Site preparation
- Networking
- Internet connection
- Staff Training

Library under **Group I** (State Central Library) requires an amount of **Rs.70 lakhs** approximately. High-end configuration for Server, several nodes, No. of peripherals, Networking components, UPS requirements etc., need to be worked out based on the approval of the work.

Library under **Group II** (City Central Library) requirements should be worked out and the existing computerization work to be brought back to normal. This might require an amount of **Rs.30 lakhs** approximately.

Libraries under **Group III**, where the present library collection is more than 50,000 need an allocation of **Rs.10 lakhs** each based on the building, Number of users, transactions and other parameters.

Libraries under **Group IV**, where the present collection is less than 50,000 need an

allocation of **Rs.5 lakhs** each based on several parameters.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Each of the above libraries under **Group III** need a high end Database server, 10-15 clients, 5 KVA UPS, Servo-stabilizers, OS, licensed Library Application Software, 2 Laser printers, 2 Bar code scanners, Flatbed scanner and also windows 10 with license and manuals.

Each of the above libraries under **Group IV** need a high end Database Server, 5- 10 clients, 5 KVA UPS, OS, licensed Library Application Software, 2 Printers, 2 Bar code scanners and a Flatbed scanner and also Windows 10 with license and manuals.

FINANCIAL ALLOCATION

Based on several parameters, approximately an amount of **Rs. 170 lakhs** is required to computerize all the major libraries mentioned above with LAN facility within the library and connecting the database server over the network for accessing the data all over the state. The estimate is for minimum computing facilities to start with and over a period of time as and when additional funds are available facilities can be upgraded by the individual libraries.

TIME FRAME FOR IMPLEMENTATION

There should be a set time frame for execution of the work of Computerization, preferably within one year from the date of approval of the proposal by the Government.

STAFF TRAINING

In order to implement computerization successfully, the crucial component apart from Hardware and Software, is the manpower. The existing staff in the public libraries should be encouraged to undergo training in the Library environment. General computer training courses will not help them except that they will be exposed to the computers. The Professional Library Staff should work with the systems in all the modules of the Library Operations.

Training capsules should be developed based on the existing skills of the staff in the Library. To start with, a few Professional staff members should be chosen from each of the above Libraries for receiving hands on training for 10-15 days in two spells. This trained manpower can train the other staff members in the library and also users in using the Online Public Access Catalogue.

CONCLUSION

At present phenomenal changes are taking place at Global level in Information Technology. The world is divided as Information Rich and Information Poor. Unless the Governments adopt Information Technology in Public Libraries, it would be highly impossible to bridge the digital divide and also to create a knowledge society.

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